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FOR: IMAGE READING-OUT APPARATUS, COPYING MACHINE AND FACSIMILE DEVICE
UTILIZING THE SAME, AND METHOD OF READING OUT IMAGE

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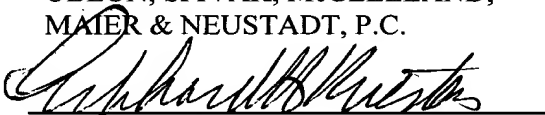
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TITLE OF THE INVENTION

**IMAGE READING-OUT APPARATUS, COPYING MACHINE AND FACSIMILE
5 DEVICE UTILIZING THE SAME, AND METHOD OF READING OUT IMAGE**

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the Invention

10 The present invention relates to an image reading-out
apparatus, in particular, an image reading-out apparatus for
exposing and scanning an original document to read out the
image on the original document and thereby obtaining image
data. Further, the present invention relates to a copying
15 machine and a facsimile device which include the image
reading-out apparatus. Furthermore, the present invention
relates to a method of reading out an image.

Discussion of the Background

20 Hitherto, in the image reading-out apparatus for
creating the image data from the image on the original
document by use of the opto-electric conversion element such
as CCD (Charge Coupled Device), the black-shading
compensation has been performed for the image data.

25 Namely, the image data outputted from the CCD are
composed of a signal component of dark current not changing

in accordance with the light receiving amount from the CCD
and another signal component changing in accordance with the
same. Since the signal component effective for the image
processing is only the signal component changing in
5 accordance with the light receiving amount of the CCD, the
black-shading compensation is performed by subtracting the
signal component of the dark current (black level value) from
the image data outputted by the CCD.

The black level value can be obtained line by line in
10 average the output of the optical black (OPB) portion
provided in a part of the CCD (tip end portion in the main
scanning direction), for instance, before reading out the
original document by use of the CCD. Moreover, the OPB
portion in the CCD is, for instance, the part in which the
15 surface of only the several pieces of pixels at the side of
starting the scan in the main scanning direction, for
instance, among the pixels of the optoelectric conversion
elements arranged in a row of the CCD is vaporized with
aluminum, and thereby the black level value can be obtained.

20 However, the background level of the original document
is detected from the image data outputted from the CCD and
the image data are changed in accordance with the background
level of the original document on which the reference voltage
of the analog-to-digital (A/D) converter at the time of the
25 A/D conversion, and thereby the following of the black

standard level detection at the black-shading compensation is delayed and the unevenness of the density occurs in the image in the case of adopting the member of removing the influence exerted on the background color of the original document from the image data. This is the troublesome matter to be solved.

Furthermore, in the system required the real-time property to perform line by line the black-shading compensation, since the number of the pixels of the optoelectric element which can be used in the OPB portion is limited, the unevenness occurs in the average value of the black level value in the image reading-out apparatus of the unpreferable S/N ratio. As the result, since the black-shading compensation differs per each line, even though the black level lines exist successively in the sub-scanning direction, the black data level differs per each line on the read-out image data and thereby the transverse stripe occurs on the image. This is also the troublesome matter to be solved.

One of the methods of solving the above matter is to improve the aforementioned S/N ratio. However, it is very difficult in consideration of the cost and technical matters. It can be thought to adopt the other method of eliminating the real time property to perform line by line the black-shading compensation as mentioned before. However, according to this method, the system employed hitherto has to be

largely changed.

Heretofore, the background arts regarding the image reading-out apparatus and the copying machine and facsimile device both including the image reading-out apparatus have been described. However, according to such background arts, there exists no advantageous functional effect for improving the image reading-out apparatus.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

According to the present invention, high quality of the image can be realized, by performing the processing corresponding to the sorts of the image processing after the black-shading compensation. Furthermore, the occurrence of the transverse stripe of the image can be prevented, and the occurrence of the density unevenness of the image can be also prevented. Thereby, the high quality of the image can be realized. Moreover, when the image processing of amplifying the comparative influence of the image data noise is performed, when the image processing not apt to be affected comparatively by the image data noise is performed, when the MTF compensation is performed, and when the smoothing processing is performed, the high quality of the image can be realized.

In the first aspect of the invention, an image reading-out apparatus for exposing and scanning an original document

to read out the image on the original document and thereby obtaining image data includes: a background level detecting circuit for detecting the background level of the original document from the image data; an analog-to-digital converter
5 for removing an influence due to the color of the background on the original document from the image data and performing the analog-to-digital conversion of the image data in accordance with the detected background level; and a black-shading compensation circuit for performing black-shading
10 compensation of the image data after the analog-to-digital conversion.

The black-shading compensation circuit includes: plural black level values calculating circuits for respectively obtaining, per each one line, black level values employed for
15 the black-shading compensation from the image data by use of respective different calculation members; a selection circuit for selecting and outputting one black level value among plural sorts of black level values outputted by the plural black level values calculating circuits; and a subtracter for
20 subtracting the selected black level value from the image data after the analog-to-digital conversion and performing the black-shading compensation.

In such structure, it is possible to select the optimum one among the plural black level values obtained by the
25 different members and perform the black-shading compensation.

In the second aspect of the invention, the image reading-out apparatus in connection with the first aspect further includes a control member for performing the selection for the image data by use of the selection circuit
5 in accordance with the sorts of the processing performed at the stage subsequent to that of the black-shading compensation circuit.

In such structure, it is possible to select the optimum one among the plural black level values in accordance with
10 the sorts of the image processing performed after the black-shading compensation.

In the image reading-out apparatus of the third aspect in connection with the second aspect, one of the plural black level values calculating circuits is the first calculation
15 circuit for calculating the black level value on the basis of the image data per one line inputted this time and the image data per one or plural lines inputted until last time; and another one of the plural black level values calculating circuits is the second calculation circuit for calculating
20 the black level value only on the basis of the image data per one line inputted this time.

In such structure, by using the black level value calculated on the basis of the image data of one line inputted this time and the image data of one or plural lines
25 inputted until last time, the occurrence of the transverse

stripe on the image can be easily prevented with low cost. Furthermore, by using the black level value calculated on the basis of only the image data of one line inputted this time, the occurrence of the density unevenness can be suppressed.

5 In the image reading-out apparatus of the fourth aspect in connection with the third aspect, the sorts of processings performed at the stage subsequent to that of the black-shading compensation circuit include first processing and second processing; the first processing is a processing of
10 amplifying the influence exerted by the noise on the image data to a larger extent than the second processing; the second processing is a processing of being less apt to be affected by the noise than the first processing; in the case of performing the first processing, the control member causes
15 the black level from the first calculation circuit to be outputted from the selection circuit; and in the case of performing the second processing, the control member causes the black level from the second calculation circuit to be outputted from the selection circuit.

20 In such structure, when the image processing of amplifying the comparative influence of the noise of the image data, the occurrence of the transverse stripe of the image can be simply prevented with low cost. Furthermore, when the image processing not apt to be comparatively
25 affected by the noise of the image data is performed, the

occurrence of the density unevenness of the image can be suppressed.

In the image reading-out apparatus of the fifth aspect in connection with the fourth aspect, the first processing is
5 an MTF compensation.

Consequently, when the MTF compensation of amplifying the comparative influence of the noise of the image data is performed, the occurrence of the transverse stripe of the image can be easily prevented with low cost.

10 In the image reading-out apparatus in connection with fourth or fifth aspect, the second processing is a smoothing processing.

Consequently, when the smoothing processing not apt to be comparatively affected by the noise of the image data, the
15 occurrence of the density unevenness of the image can be suppressed.

The copying machine of the seventh aspect of the invention is provided with an image reading-out apparatus in connection with either one of the first through sixth
20 aspects; and an image forming apparatus for forming an image on the basis of the image data obtained by the image reading-out apparatus.

Consequently, in the copying machine, it is possible to attain the same functional effect as that described in either
25 one of the first through sixth aspects.

The facsimile device of the eighth aspect of the invention is provided with an image reading-out apparatus in connection with either one of the first through sixth aspects; a transmitting/receiving apparatus for transmitting the image data obtained by the image reading-out apparatus to a network and receiving the image data from the network; and an image forming apparatus for forming the image on the basis of the image data received by the transmitting/receiving apparatus.

Consequently, in the facsimile device, it is possible to attain the same functional effect as that described in either one of the first through sixth aspects.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A more complete appreciation of the invention and many of the attendant advantages thereof will be readily obtained as the same becomes better understood by reference to the following detailed description when considered in connection with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

Fig. 1 is an outlined view illustrating the concept of the image reading-out apparatus according to the first embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a block diagram illustrating the structure of the circuit on the sensor board of the image reading-out apparatus;

Fig. 3 is a block diagram illustrating the structure of the duplicate addition average value calculating circuit constructing the black-shading compensation circuit of the image reading-out apparatus;

Fig. 4 is a block diagram illustrating the outlined structure of the copying machine according to the second embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 5 is a block diagram illustrating the outlined structure of the facsimile device according to the third embodiment of the present invention; and

Fig. 6 is a table showing an example of calculation in the duplicate addition average value calculating circuit.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

In describing the preferred embodiments of the present invention illustrated in the drawings, specific terminology is employed for the sake of clarity. However, the present invention is not intended to be limited to the specific terminology so selected and it is to be understood that each specific element includes all technical equivalents which operate in a similar manner.

Referring now to the drawings; wherein like reference numerals designate identical or corresponding parts throughout the several views (diagrams), and more particularly to Figs. 1 through 6 thereof, there are

illustrated the improved image reading-out apparatus, and the copying machine and the facsimile device both employing the above image reading-out apparatus.

Fig. 1 illustrates the concept of the image reading-out apparatus according to the first embodiment of the present invention. On the upper surface portion of the housing of the image reading-out apparatus 1, there are provided a contact glass 3 for putting an original document 2 thereon and a white standard plate 4 for use in the white-shading compensation. The white standard plate 4 is an almost white member of a uniform density which is provided in the main scanning direction in order to obtain the compensation data at the time of the shading compensation. The original document 2 is pressed by a pressing plate not shown from the upper side so as not to float from the contact glass 3.

A light source 5 radiates the light at an angle toward the reading-out surface of the white standard plate 4 and the contact glass 3. The light reflected on the white standard plate 4 or the original document 2 is directed to an opto-electric conversion element CCD 10 as an incident light through three mirrors 6, 7, and 8 and a lens 9.

The light source 5 and the mirrors 6, 7, and 8 construct first and second moving bodies not shown. The distance between the reading-out surface of the original document 2 and the CCD 10 is kept constant by the driving of the motor

13, and the both moving bodies move in the sub-scanning direction. Thereby, the exposure and the scanning of the original document 2 is performed.

The CCD 10 outputs the voltage corresponding to the incident light amount (intensity) as the analog image data. The image data are treated with the predetermined processing of the A/D conversion, etc. by use of the circuit on the sensor board 11 on which the CCD 10 is provided, and thereafter, the image data thus treated are transferred to the image processing section 12 as the digital image signal.

Fig. 2 is a block diagram for illustrating the construction of the circuit on the sensor board 11. As shown in Fig. 2, the analog image data outputted from the CCD 10 are treated with the AGC (Automatic Gain Control) processing by an analog signal processing circuit 21. Thereafter, the analog image data are converted to the digital image data by the A/D converter 22.

On that occasion, the peak value of the image data after the AGC processing is detected by the background level detecting circuit, that is, a peak/hold (P/H) circuit 23, and held as the signal showing the background level of the original document 2 at that time. And then, the output voltage of the peak/hold circuit 23 is treated with the reference voltage of the A/D converter 22, and thereby, following the detection of the background level of the

original document 2, the influence exerted on the original document 2 due to the background color is removed from the image data. In such a way, the image data are converted to the digital data by the A/D converter 22.

5 The image data after the A/D conversion are treated with the black-shading compensation by use of the black-shading compensation circuit 24. (The detail thereof is described later.) The image data are further treated with the white-shading compensation by use of the white-shading compensation circuit 25. The image data thus compensated are outputted to the image processing section 12. Various image processings such as γ -compensation, color conversion, magnification/reduction treatment are performed in the image processing section 12.

15 The black-shading compensation circuit 24 is composed of an average value calculating circuit 26, a duplicate addition average value calculating circuit 27, a selection circuit 28, and a subtracter 29. The average value calculating circuit 26 and the duplicate addition average value calculating circuit 27 obtain the black level value employed for the black-shading compensation per one line of the image data with the respective different members, from the image data outputted by the A/D converter 22. The selection circuit 28 selectively outputs one of the black level value outputted by the average value calculating circuit 26 and the other black

the black level is calculated as follows:

$$D_{b,n} = D_{opb,n}/A + D_{b,n-1} \times (A-1)/A \cdots (1),$$

wherein $D_{b,n}$ is a black level value of n lines, $D_{opb,n}$ is an average value of OPB portion of n lines, and A is a constant (duplicate addition average coefficient). The black level value of n lines $D_{b,n}$ can be obtained by performing the calculation of the above equation (1).

Here, assuming that the S/N ratio of the image reading-out apparatus 1 is bad (unpreferable) and the average value $D_{opb,n}$ of the black level value per one line of the image data becomes uneven, the average value $D_{opb,n}$ can be represented by the below equation (2).

$$D_{opb,n} = D_{b,n-1} + \alpha \cdots (2),$$

wherein α is a variation component of the noise. By substituting the equation (1) by the equation (2), the following equation (3) can be obtained:

$$D_{opb,n} = D_{b,n-1} + \alpha/A \cdots (3)$$

In the duplicate addition average value calculating circuit 27, the duplicate addition averaging is performed on the basis of the equation (1). As the result of the above averaging, it may become apparent that the influence of the above-mentioned noise is reduced to $1/A$ times. Namely, the output average value from the pixel of the OPB portion in the average value calculating circuit 26 is taken in the duplicate addition average value calculating circuit 27.

Regarding the obtained black level value of the line unit,
the duplicate addition average is further taken between
plural lines. Thereby, keeping the real time property of
detecting the black level value per line, the variation of
the average value $D_{opb,n}$ of line unit outputted by the
average value calculating circuit 26 can be suppressed and
the influence of the noise contained in the image data can be
also suppressed. Consequently, the transverse stripe does
not appear on the image.

Here, since the image data do not include the data less
than the decimal (fraction) point, it is necessary to
prohibit the data outputted from the duplicate addition
average value calculating circuit 27 as the black level value
to have the data less than the decimal (fraction) point.
Hereinafter, such treatment is called "totalizing treatment".

And then, assuming that the black level value before
rounding to the nearest whole number is $D'b,n$, the following
equations (4) and (5) can be obtained:

$$D'b,n = D_{b,n} + M_n \cdots (4)$$

$M_n = \{D_{opb,n} + (D_{b,n-1} + M_{n-1}) \times (A-1)\} / A - D_{b,n} \cdots (5),$
wherein M_n can be represented as the surplus obtained by the
calculation of the n-lines D_{opb} of rounding to the nearest
whole number.

Consequently, the duplicate addition averaging treatment
of performing the totalizing treatment can be realized by

performing the calculation shown by the following equation
(6) as an example:

$$Db,n = \text{ROUND}[\{Dopb,n + (Db,n-1 + M_{n-1}) \times (A-1)\} / A] \cdots (6),$$

wherein ROUND [] signifies the calculation symbol for

5 performing the rounding to the nearest whole number for the
number less than decimal fraction point.

In the equation (6), the black level value of the last-
time (n-1) lines is added for the duplicate addition

"(Db,n-1 + M_{n-1})", namely, the totalized error M_{n-1} is added

10 to the totalized value Db,n-1. Thereby, the data without any
error before totalizing can be restored, and the calculation
is performed on the basis of the value of the restored data.

Fig. 3 is a block diagram for illustrating the exemplary
construction of the duplicate addition average value

15 calculating circuit 27 for calculating the black level value

Db,n by performing the calculation of the equation (6). The

duplicate addition average value calculating circuit 27 as

shown in Fig. 3 is constructed with a multiplier 31, an adder

32, and a divider 33. The final black level value Db,n after

20 the calculation of the duplicate addition average value

calculating circuit 27 is outputted from the divider 33. The

black level value Db,n-1 on the last-time (n-1) lines

outputted from the divider 33 and the totalized error M_{n-1} at

that time are outputted from the divider 33 and inputted to

25 the multiplier 31.

duplicate addition follow, and regarding DO at the time of using Db, the density of the read-out image changes during this time period. Although this matter is not the thing to be noted in particular in the image quality mode of thinking much of the character, the matter is inevitably recognized as the step difference in the image quality mode of thinking much of the image density itself.

TABLE 1

ANALOG AMOUNT			DIGITAL AMOUNT					
Vref	Vin	Vopb	Din	Doph	Db	M	DO	
							AT THE TIME OF Dopb	AT THE TIME OF Db
1.65	1.5	0.1	232	15	15	0.455	217	217
1.65	1.5	0.1	232	15	15	0.341	217	217
1.65	1.5	0.1	232	15	15	0.256	217	217
1.65	1.5	0.1	232	15	15	0.192	217	217
1.65	1.5	0.1	232	15	15	0.144	217	217
1.98	1.8	0.1	232	13	15	-0.392	219	217
1.98	1.8	0.1	232	13	14	0.206	219	218
1.98	1.8	0.1	232	13	14	-0.096	219	218
1.98	1.8	0.1	232	13	14	-0.322	219	218
1.98	1.8	0.1	232	13	14	-0.491	219	218
1.98	1.8	0.1	232	13	13	0.382	219	219
1.98	1.8	0.1	232	13	13	0.286	219	219
1.98	1.8	0.1	232	13	13	0.215	219	219
1.98	1.8	0.1	232	13	13	0.161	219	219
1.98	1.8	0.1	232	13	13	0.121	219	219
1.98	1.8	0.1	232	13	13	0.091	219	219
1.98	1.8	0.1	232	13	13	0.068	219	219
1.98	1.8	0.1	232	13	13	0.051	219	219
1.98	1.8	0.1	232	13	13	0.038	219	219
1.98	1.8	0.1	232	13	13	0.029	219	219

In TABLE 1 (Fig. 6), the respective symbols represent

5 the matters as follows:

Vin: Signal of reading out the Background Level of the
Original Document (Analog Value)

Vref: Reference Voltage of the A/D Converter

Vopb: Reading-out Voltage of the OPB Portion

5 Din: Image Data before the Black-shading Compensation

Dopb: Average Value of the OPB Portion per line

Db: Black Level Value obtained by the Equation (6)

DO: Image Data after the Black-shading Compensation

In such way, the black-shading compensation is performed
10 by use of the black level value (Db in TABLE 1) outputted
from the duplicate addition average value calculating circuit
27. As to the result thereof, refer to DO at the time of Db
in TABLE 1 (Fig. 6). At this time, the occurrence of the
image's transverse stripe caused by the noise is suppressed.
15 However, the following property of the black level value to
the reference voltage of the A/D converter 22 changing in
accordance with the image density becomes bad (unpreferable).
That results in the unevenness of the image density. However,
it is apparent from the TABLE 1 that, when the black-shading
20 compensation is performed by use of the black level value
(Dopb in TABLE 1 - Fig. 6) outputted from the average value
calculating circuit 26. The result of the black-shading
compensation is DO at the time of Dopb in the TABLE 1 - Fig.
6. It is apparent from the TABLE 1 (Fig. 6) that, since the
25 following property of the black level value to the reference

voltage of the A/D converter 22 is preferable, the density unevenness of the image can be suppressed. Nevertheless, the transverse stripe is apt to occur on the image due to the noise on this occasion.

5 Here, in such image reading-out apparatus 1, the control signal MODE is outputted to the selection circuit 28 from the microcomputer 30 serving as the control member in accordance with the image processing mode performed by the image processing section in the subsequent stage of the black-shading compensation circuit 24. The image reading-out apparatus 1 selects a suitable one of the black level signal outputted by the average value calculating circuit 26 and the black level signal outputted by the duplicate addition average value calculating circuit 27. The selected signal is
10 outputted to the subtracter 29.
15

To state concretely, when the image processing mode performed in the image processing section 12 is the mode in which the image recording (imaging) is thought much thereof and the MTF compensation (first processing), etc. becomes a little strong mode, the influence of the noise in the image data is apt to be amplified. Therefore, even though the black level value Db outputted from the duplicate addition average value calculating circuit 27 is employed and the following property of the black level value to the reference
20 voltage of the A/D converter 22 is sacrificed, the transverse
25

stripe occurring on the image due to the noise can be suppressed.

Furthermore, when the mode of the image processing performed in the image processing section 12 is the mode of thinking much of the density reproduction (restoring) and performing the smoothing process (second processing), since the image processing is not apt to be affected by the noise contained in the image data, the black level value Dopb outputted from the average value calculating circuit 26 is employed and the density unevenness of the image is suppressed.

In such a way, the black level signal employed for the black shading compensation is used property in accordance with the mode of the image processing performed in the image processing section 12, and thereby it is possible to intend to realize a high-quality image.

Moreover, in the embodiment of the present invention, an example of realizing the respective circuits constructing the invention with the hardware has been described heretofore. However, it may be possible to realize all of or a part of the circuit with the software.

Furthermore, although an example of a flat bed scanner has been described in the embodiment, the present invention can be applied to a handy scanner or other(s).

Fig. 4 is a block diagram for illustrating the outlined

structure of a copying machine which is a second embodiment of the present invention. The copying machine 41 is provided with the aforementioned image reading-out apparatus 1 and an image forming apparatus 42 for performing the image formation on the basis of the image acquired in the image reading-out apparatus 1.

A laser system performing the image formation with the electrophotographic method or other various sorts of the image forming method can be used in the image forming apparatus 42.

Even in the copying machine 41, the high-quality image can be intended to realize, as in the case of the first embodiment of the present invention.

Fig. 5 is a block diagram for illustrating the outlined structure of a facsimile device which is a third embodiment of the present invention. The facsimile device 51 is provided with the aforementioned image reading-out apparatus 1, a data transmitting/receiving apparatus 53 for transmitting the image data acquired in the image reading-out apparatus 1 to the network 52 such as the telephone circuit and receiving the image data from the network 52, and an image forming apparatus 54 performing the image formation on the basis of the image data received by the data transmitting/receiving apparatus.

In the image forming apparatus 54, the laser system

performing the image formation with the electrophotographic method or the other various sorts of the image forming method can be used. Even in the facsimile device 51, the high quality image can be intended to realize, as in the cases of the first and second embodiments of the present invention.

Heretofore, the first, second, and third embodiments of the invention have been concretely described. In those embodiments, various advantageous functional effects can be attained.

The black-shading compensation in the first aspect of the invention can be performed by selecting the optimum value among the plural black levels obtained by the different unit sections. Consequently, the high-quality image can be realized.

In the image reading-out apparatus of the second aspect of the invention in connection with the first aspect, the black shading compensation is performed by selecting the optimum one among the plural black level values in accordance with the sort of the image processing performed after the black-shading compensation. Consequently, the high-quality image can be realized.

In the image reading-out apparatus of the third aspect of the invention in connection with the second aspect, the black level value calculated on the basis of the image data of one line inputted this time and the image data of one or

plural lines inputted until last time, is employed, and
thereby the occurrence of the transverse stripe of the image
can be simply prevented with low cost. Furthermore, the
black level value calculated on the basis of only the image
5 data of one line inputted this time, and thereby the
occurrence of the density unevenness of the image can be
suppressed. Consequently, the high-quality image can be
realized.

In the image reading-out apparatus of the fourth aspect
10 of the invention in connection with the third aspect, when
the image processing is performed so as to amplify the
comparative influence of the noise exerted on the image data,
the occurrence of the transverse stripe of the image can be
simply prevented with low cost. On the contrary, when the
15 image processing is performed so as not to be apt to be
comparatively affected by the noise on the image data, the
occurrence of the density unevenness of the image can be
suppressed. Consequently, the high-quality of the image can
be realized.

In the image reading-out apparatus of the fifth aspect
20 of the invention in connection with the fourth aspect, when
the MTF compensation is performed so as to amplify the
comparative influence of the noise exerted on the image data,
the occurrence of the transverse stripe of the image can be
25 simply prevented with low cost. Consequently, the high-

quality of the image can be realized.

In the image reading-out apparatus of the sixth aspect of the invention in connection with the fourth or fifth aspect, when the smoothing image processing is performed so as not to be apt to be comparatively affected by the noise on the image data, the occurrence of the density unevenness of the image can be also suppressed. Consequently, the high-quality image can be realized.

In the copying machine of the seventh aspect of the invention, the same advantageous functional effect as that of the first through sixth aspects can be realized.

In the facsimile device of the eighth aspect of the invention, the same advantageous functional effect as that of the first through six aspects can be realized.

The preferred embodiments of the present invention have been described heretofore. However, numerous additional modifications and variations of the present invention are possible in light of the above teachings. It is therefore to be understood that, within the scope of the appended claims, the present invention may be practice otherwise than as specifically described herein.

This application claims benefit of priority under 35 U.S.C 120 to Japanese Patent Application No. 11-259784 filled in the Japanese Patent Office on September 14, 1999, the entire contents of which are incorporated by reference.